

CHAPTER SIX

CHRIST IN TIVOLI

KIRCHER STUDIES FROM TWENTY AND THIRTY YEARS AGO LIKED TO emphasize the esoteric tradition that Kircher's work depended on and to relate it to theories associated to Renaissance neoplatonism.¹ And it is easy to be captivated by the Jesuit's dizzying trajectory reaching back not only to the late antique followers of Plato but even further, to mythical figures like Hermes Trismegistus, who was believed to have guarded an ancient theology, or *prisca theologia*, in which Egyptian sages shared in divine truths, or even to Adam himself, in a chain of sacred wisdom. This approach to Kircher's work is not necessarily wrong, but it tends to ignore the distinct methodologies that he used, which were perfectly adapted to the things he studied, and his careful and precise presentation of antiquarian material. Occult philosophy and esoteric traditions were *means*, an explanatory framework, used by Kircher in the interpretation of antiquarian evidence as well as of evidence in fields such as Egyptology.²

Still, the celebration of Kircher the empiricist might, in its turn, also create an idealized image of the scholar. A coherent approach offers no guarantee that the reality it uncovers is true. In other words, a rigorously applied method might still produce fictitious expositions and be used to decipher antiquities that are shams – be they Roman or Egyptian. “Nonsense” is Arnaldo Momigliano verdict on Kircher's claim that the ancient Egyptians possessed a foreknowledge of the trinity, and of course Momigliano is right – and yet somehow wrong.³ Although Kircher's interpretation of hieroglyphs as forewarnings

of Christian truths has lost support over the years, it was meticulously argued.⁴ Incidentally, printmaking was the reason he almost missed out on these studies altogether. For it was not an actual obelisk, but a print of one, that initially caught Kircher's attention, and on that first sight he thought the hieroglyphs – those strange figures – “were the work of the engraver's fancy.”⁵ Even for one of Egyptology's pioneers, a fine line separated ancient mysteries from graphic gibberish.

So, taking Kircher seriously is admirable; taking him too seriously and he would end up as one of the founders of modern science at the cost of downplaying his idiosyncratic and speculative propositions. With Kircher, the obviously erroneous might seem correct when the context changes. Ideas that are grandly misleading emerge consistent and precise in a different, more flexible paradigm than the modern one. Also Kircher understood that for his freely interpreted villa reconstructions to be convincing, their message had to be sophisticated, multireferenced, and intrinsically coherent, if not archaeologically correct. They are bold flights of fancy and yet well researched, which I do not think Kircher or anyone at the time would have seen as contradictory: The villas simply responded to an antiquity that existed on many levels, not merely on the historical one.

The history, geography, and geology of the particular region were also elements that went into the mix in the preparation of Kircher's two marvelous fold-outs. Their success depended on Kircher being able to anchor their extravagant forms to the area of Tivoli, a move it was easier to make if he could argue that the sites had been exposed in some particular way to the forces of providence. Derelict sites, therefore, assume a special importance in *Latium*. The transience of man-made things, including architecture, had been a common topos since Roman antiquity and was repeated throughout the Renaissance. Kircher's trajectory of architectural history, much informed by Old Testament narratives and construed from several of his publications, drafts a moral course where monuments are towering symbols of man's vanity and self-glorification, a pattern Kircher only sees reconfirmed on his walks around Rome.⁶ Rarely at a loss for words, he turns the *vanitas* motif into glittering prose and never ceases to marvel over the fact that monuments built to last, from Babylon to Rome, had vanished nonetheless. But Kircher gives the motif a twist. In a way it is the scientist who speaks, who wants to inscribe the short lifespan of man-made structures into the cycles of nature, encouraged by Pliny the Elder, who had treated the topic of architecture in the part titled “Mining and Minerals.” The vision of buildings broken down and immersed in their surroundings is arresting in the series of engraved illustrations in *Latium*. Their perspicuous blending of remnants and topography represents the man-made almost as part of the natural world. Buildings and nature are subjected to the same ever-changing force: “Time is the devourer of things, and in the course

of time forgetful age transforms, alters, dissolves not only the whole earthly globe but especially the site of certain places, such that nothing remains for long in its natural place, nor can it last, owing to the fragility of corruptible things,”⁷ Kircher writes in *Latium*, and in the preface he is explicit about the Roman villas:

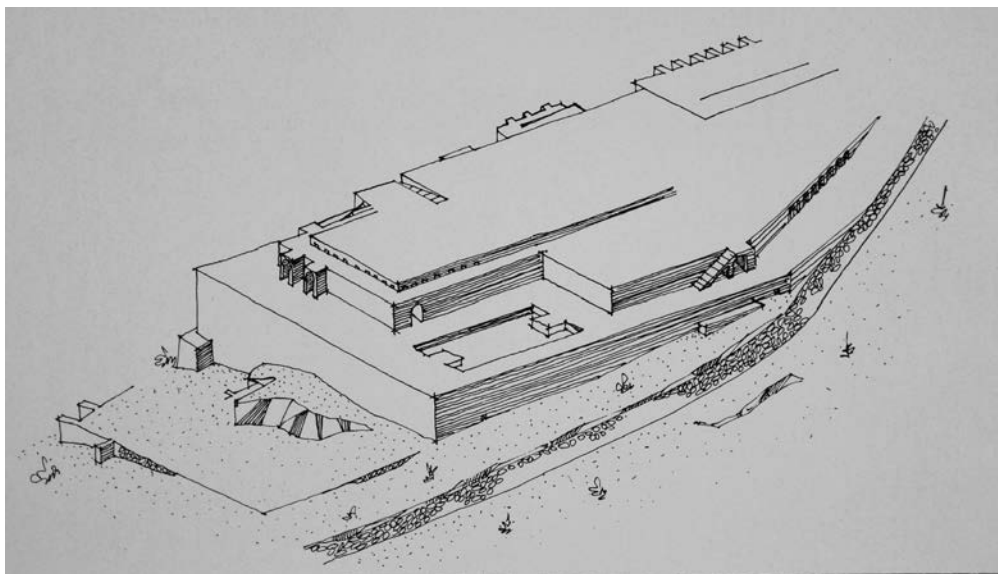
[W]here once there were the delightful retreats of Emperors, today you will observe the dens of beasts, serpents, owls, overgrown by thorns and thistles, and with wonderment you will discern that structures erected to last an eternity have in the course of a few centuries fallen into endless ruins.⁸

Thomas Burnet, a contemporary of Kircher, argued that today’s mountains are the “ruines of a broken World” – a world that before the Deluge had formed one vast, uninterrupted plain.⁹ Kircher never likened mountains to ruins, but he likened ruins to rocks. Reduced to geology – to cultivated crag, so to speak – buildings arguably seem more receptive to divine intervention. Classified as nature, Kircher’s Tiburtine villas exist independently of man, being placed directly under God, the master of Creation. For it is not by a sorcerer’s magic that the Lord makes his omnipotence known, but subtly through botanic and zoological anomalies, geological formations, chemical combinations, and climatic occurrences – in short, nature. A mysterious phenomenon is an occasion for Kircher not to disprove that mystery, but to disclose how it is produced by entirely natural causes. For example, the crosses that reportedly and miraculously formed on people’s garments when Vesuvius erupted in 1660 testified to the intervention of a Christian God – an intervention, however, that masked itself as volcanic vapors carried by the wind, according to the small book Kircher published on the phenomenon in 1661.¹⁰

Architecture over time, as we see later, existed and endured by more complex patterns than as a steady deterioration. However, initially it can be said that Kircher’s reduction of architecture to minerals – of stone returned to stone – allowed him to classify buildings as prodigal signs subjected to the power of nature, like the naturally yet divinely produced cruciform, and it is precisely as a sign that the Villa of Quintilius Varus acquires meaning in Kircher’s architectural history.

RESURRECTING VARUS’S VILLA

Substantial remains of the Villa of Quintilius Varus still exist west of Tivoli, covering no less than seven hectares and in recent times examined and published (like the Villa of Maecenas) by Cairolì Fulvio Giuliani (Fig. 90).¹¹ The first excavations of the site, however, were commissioned by Ippolito d’Este and carried out by Pirro Ligorio from 1567 onward, and before Kircher the



90. Reconstruction of the Villa of Quintilius Varus in Tivoli. Drawing by Cairoli Fulvio Giuliani published in *Tibur: pars prima* (Rome, 1970). Courtesy of De Luca Editori.

villa had been extensively described in Ligorio's "Antichità Romane" as well as in already mentioned texts by Giovanni Zappi and Antonio Del Rè.¹²

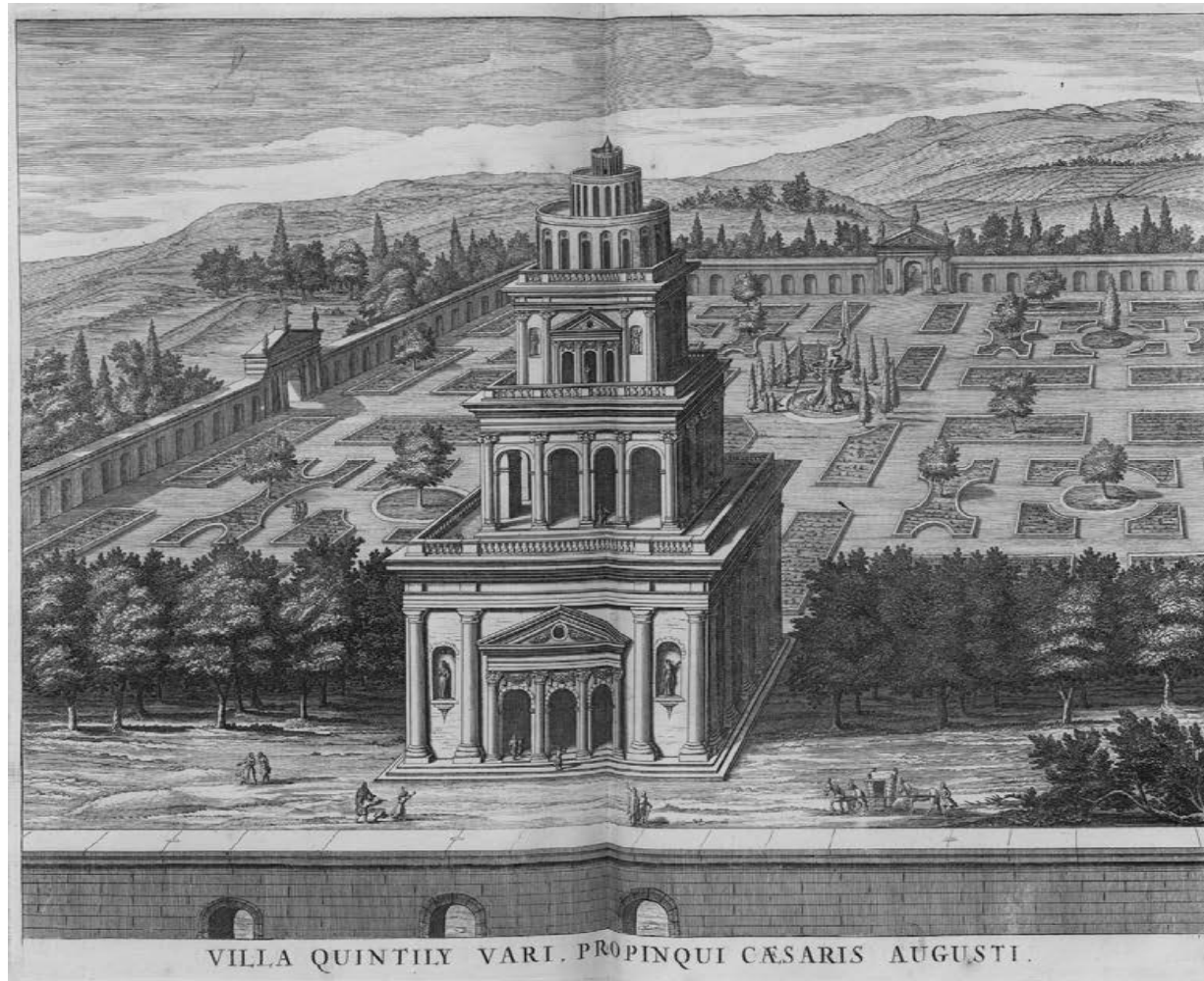
Although Kircher reassures his readers that he "has seen and examined with his own eyes" the remains, his account points to the contrary. For example, the rich decorations were a prominent feature of the villa commented on by most early writers. Ligorio observed the "very beautiful mosaics," whereas Del Rè some years later mentions the "topazes, rubies, jaspers, emeralds" that once had decorated the villa, but no longer, for Cardinal Montino in Tivoli had recognized the value of these gems and carried away more than twenty loads of precious stones from the place.¹³ When Kircher therefore describes the sumptuous materials adorning the villa, mentioning precious stones in different colors, he could never have seen them in situ because they had already been removed by Cardinal Montino.¹⁴

Nor did he consult the architectural remains, if one were to judge from his description. By the sixteenth century the villa had been reduced to two vast platforms, one on top of the other. Accordingly, Ligorio observed a striking platform – "un gran piano" – that was supported by an expansive substructure. Del Rè called these platforms "posamente" and wrote that the one above was narrower and longer than the lower one, and that it contained niches for fountains into which water was conducted from a nearby spring. Kircher, too, presents the familiar account of a substructure and a square platform, but from then on he departs spectacularly from his predecessors: On top of this platform he claims that an outstanding "palatium" once stood, with columns, ribbons

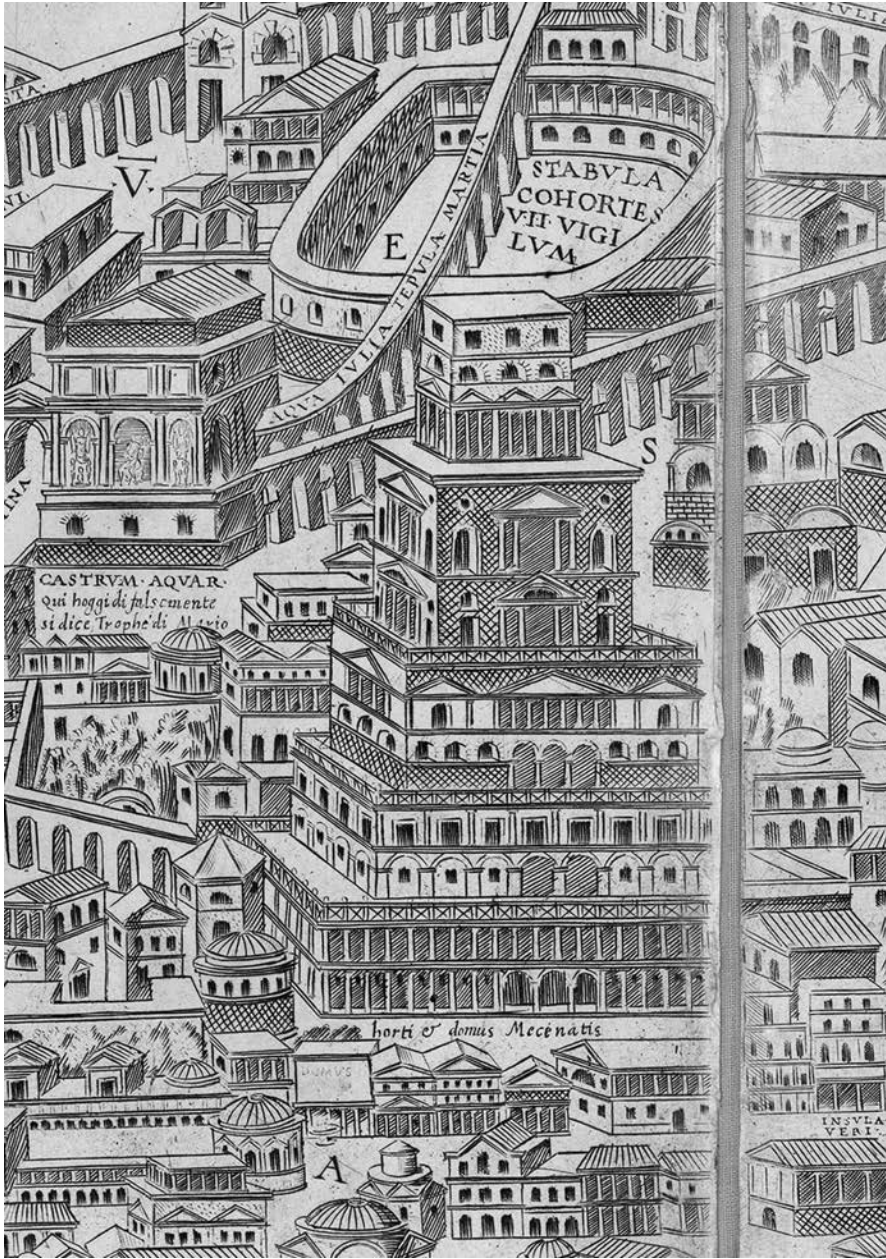
fastened to garlands, and other ornaments. Around the palatium, he continues, a vast space had been laid out (the upper platform surely) intended for games and delight, whereas the palatium itself ended in a crowning structure or, as he formulated it, “in speculam terminatum.”¹⁵ Such a “specula” can best be understood as a watchtower, and the villa was indeed noted for the magnificent view it offered.¹⁶ In fact, his use of the term echoes the revolving, multifunctional observatory called the “Maltese Specula,” described by Kircher in the *Specula Melitensis Encyclica* (1638).¹⁷

The idea of a tower-like “palatium” is nowhere to be found in earlier descriptions, and from a modern archaeological point of view, it is an invention. So how did Kircher arrive at this solution? A century earlier, Giovanni Zappi in the manuscript *Annali e memorie di Tivoli* had divided the villa’s platform into three distinct parts that each held a loggia: “[F]or this reason,” Zappi concludes, “the Villa was divided into three apartments [“appartamenti”].”¹⁸ Importantly, however, the three apartments according to Zappi were arranged on a *horizontal* level, constituting the top platform of the villa. Such a reading conforms with other accounts and, with a measure of good will, to the appearance of the actual remains. Yet, Kircher seems to have twisted or misread this passage, not unlike Lauro’s deliberate misconception of Vitruvius’s Temple of Honor and Virtue, interpreting the three apartments to have been placed *vertically*, one level above the other, in a structure for which he chose the term “trizoniam” – tripartite. “So to conclude,” Kircher wrote, “the remains show that the appearance was tripartite,” which it might or might not have been, but which held a potential that the engraving would fully realize.¹⁹

No previous illustrations of Varus’s villa had been made, and Kircher’s double-folio reconstruction is a high point in seventeenth-century Roman architectural inventiveness (Fig. 91).²⁰ Broken down to its basic components, the building represents a tripartite structure (a “trizoniam”) with a watchtower (a “specula”) on top. As Kircher scanned existing graphic material for a terraced and magnificent ancient palatium renowned, perhaps designed, for the enjoyment of extensive views, one monument stood out – the so-called House of Maecenas. In the area of the Esquiline Hill in Rome, a depiction of the “domus Mecenatis” appears on Ligorio’s reconstructive plan of 1561, reconstructed as superimposed “blocks” diminishing in size as the edifice rises (Fig. 92). But it was not Ligorio’s tower template, but the elaborated version in Lauro’s *Antiquae Urbis Splendor* that caught the imagination of Kircher and his engraver.²¹ Sixty years earlier – at the start of the century – Lauro had represented the Roman house of Maecenas, complete with a walled-in garden, anticipating Kircher’s design. Lauro’s text describes an architecture consisting of four levels placed on top of each other, in the style of a tower, with the summit ending in a “theatrum” from which a view was offered over the fields and the city (Fig. 93). The panorama was indeed an important feature of this place: Both Ligorio and Lauro quote the famous anecdote to the effect that



91. Athanasius Kircher, *Villa of Quintilius Varus, Latium* (Amsterdam, 1671), folio between pp. 158 & 159. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, RES-J-1221.



92. Pirro Ligorio, House of Maecenas, *Antiquae Urbis Imago* (Venice, 1561), detail. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, GE-C-2288.

the Emperor Nero watched the city in flames from Maecenas's tower.²² Only a few but select alterations were required for the design to reappear as the Villa of Quintilius Varus in *Latium*.

For the late seventeenth-century connoisseur of prints, the reference evoked seemed obvious. The archetypal patron, Maecenas, apparently continued to

engraved in 1670, in other words *before Latium* and in time for Kircher to project the spectacular monument's features onto the current design (see Fig. 79). But although Kircher may have manipulated the image of antiquity, he would hardly have done so simply to moralize on its protagonists; Lauro and Bayam would have been likelier candidates to intervene and reshape history in condemnation of individual acts. Kircher, by contrast, restructured the past far more subtly and also more grandly. The example of Varus's villa demonstrates that, for the Jesuit, the restoration of Roman remains meant restoring their place in Christian history, and in Tivoli he aimed for a complete transformation and reactualization of the site.

For the Jesuit Father, the unfolding of history itself culminated in the Incarnation, and prefigurations of Christian truths run through several of Kircher's architectural reconstructions, from the Ark of Noah to the monuments of ancient Egypt.²⁵ In a providential scheme, prophecies are reminders that history evolved according to plan. And *Latium*, in addition to being much else, is a guide to the region's series of premonitions. Christian authors since Lactantius and Augustine had projected the knowledge of Christ's coming onto antiquity and the Augustan period in particular. Already in the days of Constantine, Virgil's famous fourth eclogue was seen in terms of an *ex-eventu* prophecy and interpreted as a prediction of the imminent birth of Christ: "[N]ow a new generation descends from heaven on high. Only do thou, pure Lucina, smile on the birth of the child, under whom the iron brood shall first cease, and a golden race spring up throughout the world!" Kircher quotes Virgil several times in *Latium*, but more important for him still was the social dimension in which the circle of Augustus, including Virgil and Quintilius Varus, rejoiced at the birth of the Savior.²⁶ In fact, Augustus himself was believed to have had a vision of the coming of Christ, and the famous Sibylline prophecy connected the event to Tivoli. According to tradition each of the ten Sibyls foresaw an event in the life of Christ, and the so-called Tiburtine Sibyl, or Albunea, predicted the event of the birth. The legend had been in circulation since the fourth century, and several versions of it existed, but all evolved around the same basic plot: Disturbed by the Senate's wish to bestow divine honors on him, Augustus sought counsel from the oracle in Tivoli. The Sibyl told him that the true King of all Ages was to descend from heaven. Augustus then saw a dazzling apparition of the Madonna with the Child in her arms and threw himself to the ground. He refused the royal title and in gratitude erected an altar on the Ara Coeli dedicated to the first-born Son of God.²⁷ The emperor's vision makes Tivoli, if not exactly the birthplace of Christ, at least a stand-in for Bethlehem in a particularly Roman reenactment of the event.

Indeed, the legend of Augustus's vision as the turning point in the providentially planned shift of empires, from the temporal rule of the Romans to the true reign of Christ on earth, gave small Tivoli a profound significance.



94. The Tiburtine Sibyl. Engraving published in Athanasius Kircher's *Latium* (Amsterdam, 1671), p. 196. British School at Rome Library, L.691.Laz.6.

In *Latium*, Father Kircher devotes a whole chapter to the Sibyl. There he lists testimonies mentioning her from the time of Augustus onward and tells of the emperor's humbleness and his veneration of the Son of God.²⁸ He also quotes a verse from the Sibylline books, supposedly read to Augustus, which announced that the "Deum Betlemica" now walked the earth, before he proceeds to relate the event of the birth, the date, and the names of the Roman consuls at the time. Finally he describes the two monuments believed to have been erected by Augustus in the honor of Christ: the altar on the Capitol and the Sibylline temple in Tivoli. With every kind of tangible documentation thus produced, the prophecy, by nature miraculous and impenetrable, appears as a historical fact. Tivoli as the place where the projection of the nativity materialized also permeates Kircher's illustrations. In *Latium*, the engraving of the Sibyl herself shows a plump woman seated while signs of forewarnings abound (Fig. 94):



95. "Augustus." Detail from Athanasius Kircher's reconstruction of the Villa of Quintilius Varus, *Latium* (Amsterdam, 1671), folio between pp. 158 & 159. British School at Rome Library, L.691.Laz.6.

A view that reconstructs the image of ancient Tivoli shows a Latin cross, the sign of Christ, towering on a hill named "Mons Cabillus."²⁹ The miraculous appearances of cruciforms echo his earlier *Diatribes de Prodigiosis Crucibus* and suggest that the devout Jesuit antiquarian used prints not simply to illustrate but also to create a morally poignant history of antiquity as an alternative to an image of the past dominated by respect for the classical legacy.

Reconsidering the villa against this background, it emerges in a new light – in a divine light. By associating Varus's country retreat to well-known written prophecies, Kircher was able to create one in architecture. The alterations to Lauro's original reconstruction of Maecenas's house are carefully calculated. By replacing pilasters with columns and by simultaneously diminishing the number of bays, the structure appears more boldly articulated and firmly proportioned than Lauro's sketchy 1612 (or so) version. Importantly, however, the replacement signals less a change of architectural style than a change of *type*. Two heavy pairs of columns, framing niches, is an unusual motif in domestic dwellings, but a familiar element of a number of seventeenth-century Roman church façades. A palatial appearance transforms into an ecclesiastical one, and consequently into an exact architectural formulation of the reign of Christ. In these terms, the striking terraced elevation might

not be a Babylonian reference after all, but simply a church tower. Similar circular arcades characterize, for example, the imposing drum envisaged by Antonio da Sangallo the Younger for S. Peter's. Of course, it would be to go too far to enroll Kircher's Tiburtine villa in the history of guised Vatican basilicas, discussed in Chapter 4, which stretched from Franzini to Fei. But I believe that the "Villa of Varus" represents a climax, perhaps the final

bloom, of a genre that pre-converted Roman sites to Catholicism by means of architecture.

The depictions of ancient Tibur herald in different ways the birth of Christ, and the most impressive depiction of them all – the reconstructed view of Varus’s villa – is no exception. Kircher and his engraver worked out a design based not so much on the remains as on the print industry as such, “excavating” from a previously published corpus a reconstruction that fits into the scheme, but that is reidentified, restructured, and also redecorated. For in Kircher’s grand rewriting of Tivoli as a Christian site, it is in microscopic forms – in nature as in architecture – that the signs of a divine message can be detected and interpreted, by Kircher as well as by his readers. Divine providence, as well as the Baroque antiquarian’s morally corrective printmaking, allowed Kircher to reveal (or invent) the site’s significance on a level of detail that extends to the sculptural program depicted on the Roman general’s villa façade. Exploiting the connection for all it is worth, the Sibylline legend, as represented by its principal characters, is subtly displayed across Kircher’s (and the engraver’s) re-accentuated stories. Two classicizing figures flank the entrance. In the niche to the left a man stands in an erect pose, lifting his right hand to his heart. In Cesare Ripa’s *Iconologia* this is the emblematic gesture of

“amore verso iddio” – love toward God (Fig. 95).³⁰ An interpretation of this figure as the “converted” Augustus indicates the identity of the sculpture in the right niche too. A richly draped woman is holding out what seems to be a bundle of folios: perhaps a laurel or alternatively a script roll (Fig. 96). Both were considered attributes of the Sibyls, although the laurel traditionally was associated with the Libyan sibyl, symbolizing the end of the Jewish law. The script roll, however, would indicate the Sibylline Books that Kircher explicitly



96. “The sibyl.” Detail from Athanasius Kircher’s reconstruction of the Villa of Quintilius Varus, *Latium* (Amsterdam, 1671), folio between pp. 158 & 159. British School at Rome Library, L.691.Laz.6.



97. "Madonna and the Infant." Detail from Athanasius Kircher's reconstruction of the Villa of Quintilius Varus, *Latium* (Amsterdam, 1671), folio between pp. 158 & 159. British School at Rome Library, L.691.Laz.6.

connects to the Augustus prophecy in *Latium* and credits Augustus with having consulted.³¹ Considering also that the Tiburtine Sibyl had been represented previously with the similar attribute of an open book, the miniature representations on the villa's ground level walls seem to connect.³² On this basis one may attempt an interpretation of the sculptures on the second story, a zone that would symbolize the level of apparition. The niche to the left appears to frame (disregarding the miniscule format) a statue of the Holy Virgin, crowned with a halo and holding in her arms the infant Jesus (Fig. 97). The right niche holds a bearded man, also represented with a halo, who then could be a portrayal of Saint Joseph or alternatively the Evangelist Saint Lucas who gave the fullest account of the Nativity (Fig. 98). The anachronistically devised, and admittedly barely discernible, sculptural program emerges against the background of a cleverly adjusted "church" façade as an illustration of the Sibylline legend, a common motif in art at the time.³³

Quintilius Varus lived when Jesus was born and had his villa in the town where the prophetess of his coming resided. It is a connection the Jesuit Father cannot afford to miss, and acting as missionary in a long gone past he raises a shrine in this far outpost of Christianity's history. On the whole,

then, the *Villa of Quintilius Varus* offers a point of convergence – in time, place, and architectural features – for the idea of the birth of Christ. In Kircher's architectural history the villa emerges with different connotations than had it been a mere analog to the Tower of Babylon. Whereas the destruction of Nimrod's tower marked the beginning of humanity's quest for a reunification with God, the reconstruction of Varus's villa marks its completion, signaling the Incarnation – for Kircher the very turning point in history.

The Jesuit Father clearly continues and transcends the Christian-antiquarian reconstructions championed by Lauro and Bayam, giving expression to architectural ideas that are not only Christian but perhaps even particularly Jesuit. As I suggested in the introduction, reconstructions of Kircher's kind may ultimately be indebted to the founder of the Jesuit Order, Ignatius of Loyola. In his manual for religious contemplation, the *Spiritual Exercises*,

Loyola introduces each meditation with the appeal to “see the place.” Loyola demands that the reader create a mental stage and in fact rely on the basics of perspective “to see with the eyes of the imagination the length, breadth and depth” of the locations.³⁴ Further, the Jesuit novice shall visualize architecture such as “synagogues, towns and villages where Christ our Lord went preaching” or those “in the region of Babylon.”³⁵ In a sense Loyola’s suggestions imply that the one practicing the exercises restores, but restores on a scene that is entirely nonmaterial, confined to a world of contemplation. Key monuments of the past are “reconstructed” in an interior scenography meant to dramatize the stations in man’s spiritual journey. If Kircher – the well-trained Jesuit – was incapable of thinking in other than images, as Umberto Eco claimed, those “thoughts” were to a large extent furnished with monuments.³⁶



98. “Saint Joseph / Saint Lucas.” Detail from Athanasius Kircher’s reconstruction of the Villa of Quintilius Varus, *Latium* (Amsterdam, 1671), folio between pp. 158 & 159. British School at Rome Library, L.691.Laz.6.

THE ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF THE BAROQUE

Reconstructions defy history. At least they defy history to the extent that it is seen as a continuous unfolding, for they ignore chronology, or rather they conflate the epochs and events that chronology is meant to order. It is time for this study to draw some conclusions and to go at least some way to substantiating the speculations made throughout about history and temporality. The idea of the past that underlies Lauro’s and Kircher’s reformulated architecture leads to questions about the structure of time itself. Peter N. Miller and others have shown how a sense of temporality grew out of the seventeenth-century study and classification of fragments, led by Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc – Lauro’s contemporary and Kircher’s early mentor. The idea that ancient Rome existed “back” in time, or indeed of time as moving forward, was by no means self-evident. Time and its corruptive force caught the imagination of artists, poets, and intellectuals precisely in the Baroque period, finding expression in an obsession with decay and the finality of human existence. That Roman

architectural models were universals and somehow exempt from time, while also being subjected to it, created a paradoxical notion of the past evident in Thomas Browne's remark about "time which antiquates Antiquities."³⁷ He seems to be saying that time is not a category to which antiquities belong; time has only made them old.

The tactile sense of the past born from the study of remnants and the consequent emergence of connoisseurship represent one side to the seventeenth-century cult of antiques. Through examination and classification, antiquarians like Peiresc allocate things *in* time and thus frame them precisely as "past." Somehow, a restorer like Kircher does the opposite when he attempts to *extract* from time its very temporality and show the past as a present in disguise. The confidence with which the seventeenth-century print antiquarian thus rises above time's eroding force – in short, reconstructs – comes from the strong backing in the religious and especially Catholic interpretation of history and antiquity. What gives history its shape, also for print antiquarians, is the Incarnation. This one pivotal event undermines the notion of history as a progression of periods as it gathers any evenly moving time into one thrust that reactivates both past and future. The BC / AD dating system is a point in case, as expounded by the Jesuit Domenicus Petavius in 1627. In this linear representation of time, the birth of Christ forms a midpoint from which history extends infinitely in opposite directions.³⁸ With antiquity reduced to a prelude to the rule of Christ, the restoration of Roman antiques is more accurately an adjustment of them in light of what was to come. Lauro's temples and Kircher's villas neither illustrate nor properly fit into a scheme that distributes the events in a strict chronology. In the Baroque history of the ancient world, time itself is restored as Christian.

An architectural history compressed into a single vision is, in fact, what Lauro's *Antiquae Urbis Splendor* presents – not as a single vision optically, like a map, but conceptually, like a revelation. In baffling contradiction to Lauro's series of painstakingly restored monuments is the engraving he includes in which those monuments are all prophesized to collapse. In a print briefly mentioned in the introduction, Lauro imagines an apocalyptic scene from Daniel, chapter seven, which had been interpreted prophetically since the first century AD (Fig. 99). In a dream Daniel sees four beasts that signal how Christ's eternal reign would follow the succession of four earthly kingdoms and their overthrow, counting the spectacular downfall of the Roman Empire as fourth, with the result, as Lauro says, that "nothing of Rome's glory and magnitude would escape."³⁹ The Roman Empire, then, was but the last stepping-stone before the climactic event in history, the coming of Christ, and the reminder of its downfall sanctioned Lauro's enterprise on many levels. My consultation of nearly forty copies of *Antiquae Urbis Splendor* confirms that the image of the apocalyptic vision holds extraordinary preeminence: In early copies it

an apocalyptic notion of history that also extends to particular architectural examples. When, for example, accounting for the Column of Marcus Aurelius, which at the time was attributed to Antoninus Pius, Lauro advanced him in the role of a “proto-Christian” emperor. For the question Lauro needed to answer was how it was possible that this column and also the one erected by the Emperor Trajan were still standing; in other words, why had they not collapsed with the rest of Rome, as predicted by, for example, Daniel? The explanation for their survival he found in legends, related by Cardinal Baronio and others, that established the emperors’ exemplary conduct.⁴¹ Although not outright Christian, of course, they had behaved well enough to convince the Christian God to preserve the monuments through earthquakes and Barbarian invasions. So “with God’s wondrous providence it so happened that Antonius’ and Trajan’s two columns remained,” Lauro may conclude.⁴² A basic mission, then, was to redeem emperors who foreshadowed Christian virtues, and importantly, their virtuous conduct redeemed, too, the monuments they erected.

Bringing the idea of divine building directives a step further puts a particular pressure on Lauro’s enterprise, because to reconstruct buildings that God had decreed to be destroyed obviously required a special Christian license. It is true that monuments did not always testify to virtuous rulers (witness Lauro’s depictions of Nero’s buildings), but the completeness of monuments – survived or restored – is clearly a Christian moral issue as much as an archaeological one. Ruins, of course, are themselves the most poignant emblems of history’s devastating forces, and when that history is providential – that is, it evolves in accordance with a divine plan – reconstructing those ruins will have to be done in such a way as to let that plan transpire. To reconstruct, as such, entails embedding in Roman monuments a foreknowledge of Christ’s coming and of antiquity’s own ultimate overthrow. It is a complex maneuver indeed, but of a crucial importance in a Counter-Reformation reappropriation of the past: Reimagined appearances of lost forms would have to be justified in theology.

Apocalyptic visions such as those in Daniel not only assign to Rome a limited existence in history; they also dictate the conditions for its reexistence on paper. The Christian takeover of history – and its past, present, and future – also implied renegotiated appearances of Rome’s monuments. When looking back at the time before the Incarnation, Lauro (and Kircher naturally) faced one dilemma in particular: God’s annihilation of the ancient city, announced in biblical apocalyptic visions, challenged the legitimacy of resurrecting it. The reason why Rome had to collapse was self-evident, but not the reason why it should be reconstructed. Indeed, since the destruction of the pagan capital was divinely ordained, what gave Lauro – a mere engraver – the audacity to rebuild it?

The question, partly answered in Chapter 4, points to the ambiguous but important status of printed reconstructions in the Roman seventeenth century. For as representation, architecture discloses a dimension that actual solids are unable to do. Printed reconstructions make the idea of the Catholic faith real at the cost of making a symbol of the ancient building. The dictates of a Christian rhetoric partly explain, I believe, the insubstantial feel to Lauro's reconstructions; the solutions keep their distance from the archaeological facts because it was precisely in their "archaeological" form that God had prescribed their destruction. One should be wary, therefore, to interpret Lauro's sketchiness as mere ignorance; he added a degree of transparency into the presentations that allowed moral undertones to transpire, thereby signaling a Christian message. Expert translations of solids like the ones achieved by, for example, Serlio and Palladio relished in a verisimilitude that to Lauro only betrayed the ephemeral nature of all man-made things. The marked deterioration of Lauro's style and technique in the execution of the series for *Antiquae Urbis Splendor* corresponds to the late entry in the project of the theologian Bayam and, significantly, to the granting of a papal privilege in 1598. The reduction of quality may have been religiously motivated, for the purpose of transmuting sites into signs and conceding all glory to God alone.

Kircher's conception of Rome's place in history rests on the same sources as Lauro, primarily Baronio's *Annales* but also Eusebius and Augustine. Like Lauro and many others at the time, Kircher finds divine providence instrumental in driving history and in destroying buildings. Roman villas in Lazio are no exception. Their destined course from lavish retreats to sorry remains unveils the divine will at work also in the peaceful countryside around Rome. It was God's plan, he wrote, that Hadrian's impressive villa would last only for eighty years; Hadrian himself, he adds, died as punishment for his persecution of the Christians.⁴³ But Kircher also transcends Lauro. The predecessor's sporadic forecasts of Christian truths are anachronisms that in Kircher's work run together and erupt in a comprehensive narrative. Whereas Lauro clung to the content of individual legends and premonitions, Kircher directed the surge of history, in which such signs were mere flotsam, into a structured form. Nothing less than the aim to harmonize pagan history with a biblical one prompted the Jesuit into action. The idea of history that permeates Kircher's books, then, is more systematically expressed and all encompassing than in Lauro's oeuvre: Anything else would be surprising in light of the fact that Kircher was the great unifier who pieced together vestiges of various cultures and pasts into one divinely governed history.

The principle with which Kircher organized history has been of particular interest for scholars. Chronology, for example, was a subject in its own right and of great significance in the attempt to reconcile a biblical sequence

of events with the conflicting sequence of early Egyptian dynasties.⁴⁴ The incompatible time frames forced the historian and philologist Joseph Scaliger to date the first dynasties to before the beginning of the Christian history, and – controversially – also even before Creation. Kircher’s history unfolds reassuringly within a biblical narrative. Even early pagan cultures like Egypt connect to this narrative in a manner that makes the Jesuit’s history also a history of a gradual disclosing of eternal Christian truths as dealt with in books such as *Obeliscus Pamphilius* (1650), *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* (1652–55), and *Turris Babel* (1679). Humankind, naturally, originates with Adam, but from the time of his sons Seth and Cain, history split into a dual course, staked out not so much by actual events as by two distinct moral paths.⁴⁵ Seth’s offspring, infused with divine wisdom, humbly cultivated the love of God, whereas the descendants of Cain were worldly and vainglorious, in a development that took less the form of a progression than a continuously reenacted *stellungskrieg* between the opposing forces of human nature.

Kircher’s trajectory almost immediately also branched into a history of building that followed more or less along the same moral divide – or in fact embodied it. Why did God permit, wonders Kircher, the cursed offspring of Cain and Ham and their “loathsome, idolatrous tyrannies” to produce so many marvelous monuments over the centuries?⁴⁶ Ham’s grandson was Nimrod, the builder of the Babylonian tower, an edifice that in Kircher’s words exemplified the arrogance and impiety of its constructor. The reign of Babylon was not confined to one period in history only, but *recurred* with the emergence of any new secular power, re-manifested too in these powers’ iconic buildings. For example in Mexico, Kircher observed that the Aztec pyramids discovered by Cortés restate the form of the biblical tower, just as the Chinese pagoda illustrated in *China Illustrata* was raised in similar terraces.⁴⁷ Humankind, according to Kircher, is never able to break free from this repetition of a basic scheme of architectural types: “the unsound, erroneous and irritating mania of constructing many monuments, just like the ancient peoples.”⁴⁸

That said, the history of building also trailed along a brighter path. The Jesuit found a “morally good” architecture in simple, square structures. Foremost among these was Noah’s Ark, which he imagined was constructed on a simple grid of identical cubicles.⁴⁹ In Christian tradition the Ark was an allegory of the church, whose measurements prefigured the proportions of Christ, built on numbers originally provided by God. It was also, of course, the supreme model in architecture. S. Maria in Mentorella mirrors this simple square distribution, representing perhaps for Kircher an analogy to the Ark – towering on a Tiburtine Mount Ararat. Interestingly, the shrine brings the history of virtue in architecture up to date and ties into contemporary patronage with Kircher’s dedication to Emperor Leopold I in *Turris Babel*: In contrast to the monuments of Babylon, he writes, Leopold’s buildings are destined to last

because they conform “exactly and prudently” to the correct “archetypon,” that of the Ark of Noah. It is the simplicity of plan, not merely good deeds, that saves architecture from divinely decreed destruction. But then again it was Kircher who in reality “rebuilt” this particular church, and it was Leopold, as we remember, who donated the largest amount of money for its rebuilding. Therefore, it is not altogether correct to say that Kircher adds his Constantine sanctuary to a history of divinely rescued antiques, like the two spiral columns. Rather, he adopts the set-up of that history in order to create one of his own.

The history of buildings, then, unfolds as a moral, not a temporal, recurrence of types. In a perpetual status quo, basic forms seem to vary rather than to evolve. Of course, in a post-Enlightenment world, an architectural history that lacks the component of time is not a history at all, but an architectural metaphysics – or that is at least the category in which a broad scholarship on Kircher prefers to place the Jesuit’s engraved architecture. Raynaldo Perugino, for example, pushes the idea of architectural type to a high degree of abstraction when he holds that Kircher unfailingly based his reconstructions on simple, elementary forms like circles, quadrants, and pyramids, which made them “always referable to an astral correspondence,” reflecting a “cosmic harmony.”⁵⁰ In this view, reconstructions appear simply as configurations reflecting a transcendent order. However, the fact that metaphysical speculations often permeate Kircher’s history writing does not always permit an exotic reading of his works. The view of his two Tiburtine villas as “philosophical reconstructions” or “pseudo-edifices” ignores Kircher’s aspiration as an historian and antiquarian and also the nuances of his biased approach.⁵¹ *Latium*, after all, indicates no points of reference in realms other than the region of Lazio. To regard the villas as architecturally guised platonic forms deprives them of meaning as monuments in history. Although the references to Maecenas and the Nativity escalate into full-blown meditations on patronage and salvation, respectively, they are references that depend on the sites’ specific time and place. In fact, these reconstructions exist not outside Kircher’s notion of history; on the contrary, they are fundamental to his formulation of the very concept of it.

TIME REBUILT

The problem Augustine needed to solve was that the Second Coming of Christ seemed nowhere close to be happening. The indefinite delay, together with the Barbarian invasion of Rome in 410, prompted him to undertake no less an endeavor than to reshape the superstructure of existence for disoriented Christians. As Eusebius’s *History of the Church* served as a model of history, so Augustine’s monumental *De Civitate Dei* (*City of God*), composed in the early

fifth century, provided a model of time, or the skeleton of that history, and a fundamental and explicitly named source for Lauro and Kircher, as well as for seventeenth-century historians in general.⁵²

In the version of history described in *Turris Babel*, Kircher continually quotes *City of God*. Spectacular in its breadth, Augustine's text not only combines the events from the Fall to the Nativity in a single narrative (15.1–18.46) but it also describes Babylon and Rome as reflections of the city "archetype" erected by Cain (15.5). In this book, Kircher would find a history of earthly empires readjusted in light of the Incarnation, an event recorded by Augustine in a catalog of prophecies including the ones of Daniel and the Sibyl (18.22–37). An inquiry into Augustine's notion of time places Baroque antiquarianism in its widest angle, but also, I believe, highlights its distinct features, and some themes from *City of God* are already familiar from our earlier discussion. With the Fall of Adam, says Augustine, humankind divided into two, the lot of Abel and the lot of Cain, each representing the beginning of two possible paths for people to take. For some, the walk led to an existence of earthly temptation and ultimate damnation; for others it led to the Incarnation – of God made real in the flesh – and the new *Tempora Christiana* that, from that moment on and including every period since, remains an interim, which Augustine called *saeculum*. Only the Second Coming will end it, when the chosen ones are separated from the damned. But until that day comes, during the period constituting human history, humankind has the choice to inhabit the *civitas dei* or the *civitas terrena* – the city of God or the city of men. Human history is insignificant in itself, but the individual actions it consists of are crucially important for the afterlife that awaits each person. To Augustine and anyone reading him, history forms but an airy superstructure within which cross-temporal shifts unproblematically might happen. Since the meaning of history lies beyond both time and place, the reorganization of periods, events, buildings had no structural consequences, not for Augustine nor for his devoted interpreters.

Augustine obviously provided the model on which Kircher composed his architectural history. The *City of God* itself, however, can hardly be said to profess an architectural history, or a history of any kind, because within in its scheme, history does not truly evolve and the cities serve as metaphors: Empires shift, and cities with them, in a moral, not a temporal, unfolding of events. The city that Adam's son Cain built represents earthly ambition and self-contentment, whereas his brother Abel chose not to build at all: "We see then that the two cities were created by two kinds of love: the earthly city was created by self-love reaching the point of contempt for God, the Heavenly City by the love of God carried as far as contempt of self (14.28)." So it would be erroneous to regard the two cities as actual metropolises that succeed each other. The two cities are in reality societies that exist side by side, but one comprises the secular and love of self, like idolatrous Romans, and the other

the humility and devotion of those merely passing through in the expectation of an eternal life. The cities frame two conditions that apply to individuals, as well as to empires, but that in their essences are timeless.

Reconstructions in the Baroque are on a fundamental level Augustinian. Neither Kircher nor Lauro annuls the value of time's passage, but they release it from a strict chronological order, repositioning its segments – its “periods” – side by side in a deliberate juxtaposition. One could be tempted to say that both reapply the basic structure of the Incarnation itself – of truth made corporeal – in architecture as Christian triumph materialized in built form, whether it is the reconstructed Temple of Jupiter or a Lazian villa. In this light the *Villa of Quintilius Varus* represents not a conflation of time – of past and present – but time's own double layer. Of course, Augustine's cities are not to be understood literally as urban sites, but still they might easily be read in that way as two dimensions overlapping – a kind of reality that in fact only reconstructions might express, like a palimpsest with the *civitas dei* superimposed on the *civitas terrena*, the Christian truth overlaying pagan errors. Augustine's division of history into two parallel but morally divergent courses for humankind to take not only permits – but requires – the doubly exposed reconstructions and their mixing of times. The morally inferior “Roman” viz. earthly architecture lets the “Christian” one transpire, or vice versa. No doubt the Augustinian time model supported and dictated a firm Catholic redrawing of Renaissance archaeological reconstructions in works like *Antiquae Urbis Splendor* and Kircher's history of ancient Tivoli. Augustine's notion of time goes some way to explaining the anachronisms in reconstructions of Rome. More precisely, reconstructions are a means to revive the early Christian notion of time; they are remnants of a temporality that, when restored in architectural form, reminded readers that God's final grace had yet to be attained.

Augustine, unwittingly, gave printmakers an importance. The *saeculum* does not evolve, but extends between two momentous events, in a perpetual *now*, with no resolve either backward or forward until history itself ends and is replaced by the heavenly City on Earth. Augustine's *saeculum* is more precisely understood as an eternal present than as a contraction on the timeline; as Zachary Sayre Schiffman puts it, it is “a space of an ongoing transaction.”⁵³ The unresolved *saeculum*, then, extends to envelope not only Augustine but also seventeenth-century antiquarians. Lauro and Kircher are caught in the same earthly interlude – they too are awaiting the ultimate verdict – as the age they resurrect. To them, the past does not exist in temporal isolation, but conjoins with the present in a continuum in which little separates engravers from emperors – or at least those among the emperors who were seen as “proto-Christians” like Antoninus Pius, Titus, and Augustus. Reconstructing becomes *con*-structing, an active and, one hopes, a redeeming operation enacted in the guise of sixteenth-century antiquarianism. In a history without

progress, without direction, the different stages of a building's existence may coalesce in the same image and the same architectural form. In the perpetual *now*, the un-progressive interlude Augustine proposes, the construction would in fact not yet have *stopped*. Or put differently, a reconstruction shows the original in the process of still being modeled, thereby vindicating any willful departure from archaeological facts. The final form of the past – including its architecture – is yet to be negotiated. The act of reconstructing is part of an “ongoing transaction” with providence in which the printmaker obviously held a trump card, which leads me to a final point. Adhering to the scheme laid by Augustine, printed reconstructions nimbly illustrate the simultaneity of the earthly and the heavenly city without building either. Graphic representations short-circuit the mania for building pursued by the cursed offspring of Cain, via Babylon and ancient Rome. In fact, prints are the only means to embrace a large number of people, like a city does, through multiplication and dissemination of single images, while still letting eternal truths transpire. The translucent and ephemeral quality of folios re-creates that ideal of non-architecture – constructions purely of the mind – that accompanies architectural history's moral unfolding throughout the seventeenth century.

AS IF IN A BRIGHT MIRROR

The seventeenth-century idea of time's passage thrived on metaphors. The philosopher and biographer Pierre Gassendi saw it as a darkness descending on the fame and memory of things, Peiresc as a devouring beast that “consumes metals and marbles,” and Francis Bacon likened time to a deluge from which antiquarians may recover the debris of history.⁵⁴ Yet, to antiquarians who reconstructed the past, time's destructive force was of little help, and metaphors of constancy and preservation would be of more use.

Theorizing about prints in the seventeenth century soon stumbles on the designation of the material as being “reproductive.” Walter Benjamin's sharp division between the original artwork and its copy in his celebrated essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* cemented the idea of reproduction (which according to Benjamin includes woodcuts, engravings, and etchings) as a facsimile, in contrast to more generous ideas of copying entailed by, for example, the Renaissance *imitatio* and by classicist and historicist views on copies as reenactments of an original creative process.⁵⁵ The term “reproductive,” as Michael Bury points out, is often dismissively used to characterize prints from the late sixteenth century onward and implies mechanical copying, “but often what was going on was a highly creative attempt to find an equivalent and to create a graphic object that was of value in its own right.”⁵⁶ As this investigation of printed reconstructions has shown, the grades of replication hold in store a range of meanings that I believe make the term

“reproductive” useless; this study thus also represents a contribution to the theory of the history of prints in the seventeenth century.

It is a history that in part hinges on the quality of execution. On the one hand, Roman guidebook illustrators seem to have brought architectural history to a dead end by bowing to the increasing pressure to produce large quanta and small-format publications. From an artistic point of view, this distorted material classifies less as graphically reconstructed ruins than as graphically ruined reconstructions. On the other hand, illustrated books reached a new level of quality with Kircher, who exploited his pan-European network and turned to Dutch publishers and engravers. In his works the process is reversed, and inexperienced renderings – like the reconstructions of, for example, Lauro and Fei – meet a surprising change of fortune in extravagant and beautifully detailed reworkings.

And yet within this chain of duplications, regardless of whether it spiraled upward or downward in terms of quality, another and quite concrete kind of history can be detected. The ongoing extrication of variants from an existing paper repertoire of models – from Ligorio to Lauro, from Cartaro to Kircher – organized the succession of images not in time, but as layers. Put differently, the actual process of retracing structured architectural history less in a development than as superimpositions. We have seen how antiquity was pictured, printed, copied, and reprinted in a history that unfolds through or even *as* prints – or indeed as *folds* in Gilles Deleuze’s sense, as suggested in Chapter 2.

In a more lofty perspective, the incised image was of such a nature that in certain theoretical contexts it competed with architecture. Incised folios were indeed appropriately fragile to represent the transience of earthly things, but they also represented the medium through which the divine worked. In Christian tradition God was the author of three structures in particular – the Ark of Noah, the Tabernacle, and the Temple of Solomon – but how exactly did he create them? He did not meddle in their actual construction naturally; instead, what the Scriptures tell us is that He transmitted drawn designs. God’s hand in architectural representation is reported in Ezekiel’s vision of the divinely conceived temple: The Lord commands Ezekiel to “describe to the house of Israel the temple and its appearance and plan” (Ezekiel 43.10–11). God’s use of the term “plan” or “pattern” is striking (*tavnit* in Hebrew; *graphe* in Greek) and recurs in relation to another of the Lord’s building projects.⁵⁷ On Mount Sinai God hands down to Moses not only the commandments but also the design of the tabernacle, declaring, “According to all that I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle . . . , so you shall make it” (Exodus 25.9).⁵⁸ Although details are wanting, these well-known biblical passages define visual representation as the Lord’s chosen means of communicating architecture. Even the Temple of Solomon, destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC, was originally drawn by God: As King David handed his son Solomon

the temple plans he said, “All these things have come to me delineated by the hand of the Lord, so that I might understand the design.”⁵⁹ Juan Bautista Villalpando, Kircher’s forerunner at the Collegio Romano, reconstructed these “drawings” when he visualized Ezekiel’s temple vision in a series of forty-eight high-quality engravings published between 1596 and 1604: “It deserves also our praise,” Villalpando comments, “that God with his hand drew the design, the figures, the location of all the elements, the graphic plan, the elevations and perspectives.”⁶⁰ God as architect, in seventeenth-century interpretations, is less a master builder than a draftsman. Accordingly, it is not the buildings’ historical form that a Baroque reconstruction necessarily recreates, or in which the building any longer had the right to exist, but its form as a divinely sanctioned design. In other words, engravings are more than illustration; they also are a reflection of the other-worldly, ahistorical realm.

Indeed, the foundation of Rome was nothing but a “reflection” of the first city founded by Cain, according to Augustine in *City of God* (15.5). And to Flavio Biondo, writing in the 1450s, Rome was once again to become “Speculum, exemplar, imago omnis virtutis” – the *mirror* of all virtues. But it is not the scheme of recycled empires that is our final consideration, but the idea of the reflection as a guarantee of architecture. How anyone was able to build when God had patented all buildings was a question with which architectural theory around 1600 grappled. The awkward transition of building models from an intangible divine realm to creating them in visible form needed an explanation. Federico Zuccaro in *L’Idea*, as we remember, suggested that all forms resided with God, including architecture, which then spontaneously appeared in the mind of the God-fearing architect. But this internal transmission of forms was not the only solution. To return to *Latium* and time’s devastating effect, Kircher in the preface describes with glee a world of monuments and marvels irreversibly destined for decay. Yet, as if to exonerate his own project and detach himself from the spectacular extravagance of the book – itself a “marvel” of sort – he defines the book’s relation to the real world with a striking metaphor: “There is nothing, unless it be eternal, that can be stable and lasting, which shall be clearly shown in the course of this work as if in a bright mirror.”⁶¹ In the thoroughly illustrated opus Kircher validates the depictions’ truthfulness and objectivity by presenting them as a “reflection.” The mirror, importantly, also licenses that slight distortion to reality that Kircher’s reconstructions manifest, because it not only holds up an image of this world but also puts on display the reflection of others.

Prints as mirrors go back to the very title of Antonio Lafréry’s publication *Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae* – the “mirror of the Roman wonders.” The title presents the prints in the collection as a medium in which the past and present monuments of Rome are “mirrored.”⁶² Correspondingly, and

throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, printed views come with engraved ornate *cornice* that presented the content framed in imitation perhaps not of pictures, but of mirrors; one beholds a view shown as a reflected rather than invented image, profiting from the mirror's claim to verisimilitude. To Kircher a reflected world, however, is also a world of deception. In his book on China and the East he repeats a point he also had made about ancient Egypt – that in all heathen cultures, whether Egyptian or Chinese, one observes “as if in a mirror” an imitation of the mysteries and episodes of the Holy Scriptures. Idolatry, Kircher says, is thus Christianity's false copy and a “distorted representation” of the True Faith.⁶³ But then again the entire world and all its manifestations were signs of a divinely governed order: “[A]ll created things,” Kircher continues elsewhere, “are nothing else but mirrors which reflect to us the rays of the divine wisdom.”⁶⁴ This concise metaphor places all of humankind in the shimmer of speculums. In fact, the mirror enters Kircher's discourse as the surprisingly concrete aid used by the divine to manifest architecture to man. In his *Ars Magna Lucis et Umbrae*, published in 1646, Kircher quotes a report from a fellow Jesuit who some years earlier had observed an extraordinary meteorological phenomenon in the sky above the strait of Messina. The Jesuit priest explains that he was sitting by his window overlooking the bay when the sea suddenly swelled like a black mountain. Along the summit a crystal expanded, which he compared to a mirror, and in this mirror he saw “a row of more than ten thousand pilasters, and all equidistant.” The Jesuit then describes

how in a moment's time the pilasters rose and arched into the form of Roman aqueducts or the substructures of [the Temple of] Solomon, and then, springing from the arches, royal palaces took shape, all with identical towers, until the towers transformed themselves into a theater of colonnades, and as the theater faded the colonnades changed into a long façade with ten rows of windows; again all was rearranged into a forest of pine trees and cypresses.⁶⁵

The description of this celestial mirage ends with the Jesuit observing how it all disappeared, “and the sea, aided by winds, once more returned to sea.” It is an architectural history compressed in a vision, a shimmering parade of types like a *Speculum Magnificentiae*, but staged in the form of a mirage. However to Kircher, as to Baroque artists and theorists at large, the important question was not necessarily what the divinely paraded buildings looked like, but by what ingenious means they had been conveyed. In an age that strove to demonstrate the miraculous in the language of the emerging new sciences, divine visions become almost a question of technology: What mechanism would make architecture appear in the sky? What is the medium of an apparition?

Reflecting objects were simply the Lord's broadcasting medium. The devices that Kircher engineered himself re-created on a hobby scale the special effects that providence had in its repertory. His so-called catoptric chest displayed illusory scenes so effectively that some visitors reached out to grab the objects shown. It also displayed towns and "infinite colonnades," according to reports, capturing almost the Messina vision through a mirroring device in essence similar to that God himself apparently employed.⁶⁹

Allegorizing prints as mirrors endows them with reflection's dual capacity. Truly understood as *speculae*, prints also borrow the ability to reflect the transcendent. Printed reconstructions therefore may project not only a reality that is gone (like imperial Rome) but also reality as apparition, thereby capturing dimensions not apparent to plain sight. It was a problem, of course, how mundane printmaking at all may be seen to administer eternal truths and interpret providential history. Casting prints as mirror images went some way toward bridging the gap. The *speculum* enfolds the graphic medium in a metaphor that helps connect it not to a transcendent realm but to an earthly one that is lost. Prints as reflections sanction the distortion and "providential" intervention that characterize the converted antiques in the compendiums of Lauro and Kircher. The legitimacy of reconstructions therefore rests with the ephemeral materiality of print itself. It also rests with the incised delineation's proximity to the medium with which God himself allegedly communicated architecture and, finally, with the idea I have introduced that connects to the somewhat technical "reflection," which I have argued guaranteed the constancy and validity of the content. Prints, also as imprints of the divine, are an important corrective to the more conventionally held views of a reproductive art that was prey to the restrictions of a competitive industry and to the demands of patrons.